

Balanced Leadership: A Brief Overview

As we think about leadership and the impact of leadership on student achievement we need to consider what the future of education will like look, or at least, make some assumptions about the future of schools and schooling. While your assumptions and McREL's assumption are probably pretty similar, **here is what we assume about the future of schools and schooling.** First, we need to get the most possible out of our schools. Secondly, in light of the resource, social, political, & design realities facing our schools and their leaders, schools (as currently designed) are not likely to meet the expectation that no child be left behind. Lastly, we need education leaders who are prepared to deal with the first- and second-order implications of changes implied by the first two assumptions. You all know too well the implications for our children to have an opportunity to significantly compete in a global society.

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McREL's assumptions

- We need to get the most possible out of our schools.
- In light of the resource, social, political, & design realities facing our schools & their leaders, schools (as currently designed) are not likely to meet the expectation that no child be left behind.
- We need education leaders who are prepared to deal with the first- and second-order changes implied by both assumptions.

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Understanding how the future will unfold and preparing for it now is critical for you as educational leaders. It is also important to **understand the current changes affecting schools and you as leaders.** First, there are much higher expectations for learning than there have ever been. The focus used to be on teaching. Now the focus is on learning and ensuring that learning—not just teaching—is happening for all students. The stakes are greater than ever. High stakes accountability are not likely to go away. Politicians and the public alike want to see results. Accountability coupled with the rapid increase in information has led to increased scrutiny by the public of our schools. It is not that teachers and administrators are not working hard enough. In fact, most of you are working tirelessly to improve student learning. The truth is most educators are overworked.

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Changing environments

- Higher expectations
- Greater accountability
- Rapid increase in information
- Public scrutiny
- Work overload

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improve, and the competition created by the increasing existence of market-based schools. **These changes and their effect on schools call for new expectations of school leaders.**

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New expectations

- Leading increasingly complex change
- Relentless focus on improving student achievement
- Sharing leadership



The principal cannot do it alone.

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Our environment (educational and social) is changing and at an increasing rate. This has an effect on schools and the work you engage in as leaders. There is a lack of clarity and increased ambiguity in our work. There are so many external demands placed on schools that it is difficult to choose the right focus. Determining what is essential is difficult because everything is essential right now. This creates a major increase in stress. The demands on the system result in stressed teachers, staff, administrators, and students. There is also a lack of trust created by the stress, the sense of urgency to

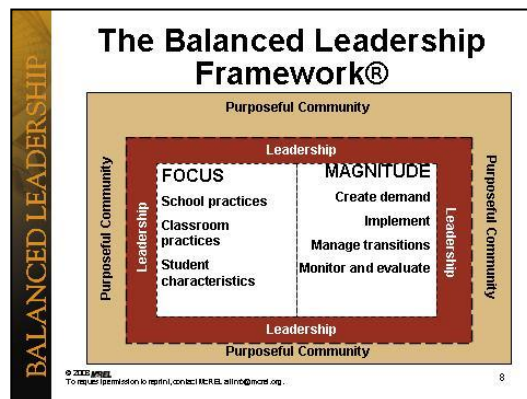
It is clear what the new expectations of school leaders will be in the near future. First, the principal will need to know how to **Lead Change Effectively.** Our environment will continue to change and those changes will continue to affect schools in dramatic ways. At the same time, the principal will need to maintain a relentless focus on improving student achievement. The high-stakes accountability era is unlikely to end in the near future and there are growing public demands

for higher quality education. Finally, **the principal cannot do it alone. Principals must share leadership with others.** The kind of sharing needed is beyond most current models. Principals have to develop models of shared leadership in which others assume responsibilities that have traditionally been assigned to the principal. This also means that principals have to know how to develop others and support them in their fulfillment of these responsibilities.

Our response to the current demands of and the future expectations of educational leaders is illustrated and explained in the **Balanced Leadership Framework®**. Through this framework we hope to provide **a simple model that helps us define, understand and emphasize a set of leadership responsibilities that are associated with higher levels of student achievement.**

The 21 leadership responsibilities based on the 66 associated practices found in the research are supported through an exhaustive review and application of the literature on leadership. Our objective is to build capacity through meaningful and applicable staff development in individuals and organizations to do what they already know (Educational Leadership) and do it even better. First, McREL's work is based on large-scale and rigorous quantitative research correlated with student achievement. McREL has developed a framework, the Balanced Leadership Framework™, which has four components:

1. Leadership
2. Focus Of Change
3. Magnitude Of Change
4. Purposeful Community



It is important to know that this framework represents McREL's attempt to assist you and other practitioners in **integrating and applying the findings to support your practice.** This framework serves as an organizer, and each of the components – leadership, focus, magnitude, and purposeful community can be used by leaders intentionally and strategically to connect a vision for leadership with a plan of action.

As you can imagine, we ask quite a few questions at McREL in order to fulfill our mission of integrating theory and practice! Regarding leadership and seeking to better understand the connection between leadership and student achievement, the first question we asked was, **“What quantitative and qualitative research on school, teacher, and leadership practices associated with student achievement and institutional productivity should we use to improve schools?”**

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Findings from McREL's meta-analysis

1. There is a relationship between leadership and student achievement; **leadership matters.**
2. There are 21 leadership responsibilities, each with statistically significant and positive relationships to student achievement.
3. Leaders perceived as strong do not always have a positive impact on achievement.

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Our second research question is more specific to leadership and is based on McREL's assumptions that new forms of schooling will replace the current forms and that current leaders need to prepare to lead between the current and new forms. The second question is, **“What must leaders know and be able to do to both improve current forms of schooling and lead the transition from current forms to new and more productive forms of schooling?”** At the conclusion of a very

rigorous meta-analytic study and an exhaustive review of applicable literature, three findings were clearly evident. First, **what principals do has an effect on student achievement.** Essentially, *Leadership Matters*. The second finding uncovered 21 leadership responsibilities. These 21 responsibilities are not new and can be found throughout the theoretical literature on leadership. **What is critical of these responsibilities is their statistical significance and positive association with student achievement.** The third finding revealed, in some instances, school leaders that were perceived as strong by their faculty did not have a positive impact on student achievement. We term this confounding finding as the “Differential Impact” of leadership. For more information regarding our meta-analysis on leadership, please refer to *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*, by Marzano, Waters, McNulty (2005).

Finding 1 – Leadership Matters

The average correlation between principal leadership (independent variable) and student achievement (dependent variable) is .025. In other words, increasing leadership effectiveness one standard deviation is associated with a 10 percentile point gain in student achievement. Therefore, taking an already talented school leader and providing meaningful staff development, over time, we would expect to see improved student achievement.

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Finding #1:
Leadership & student achievement

Average correlation (*r*) between principal leadership behavior and school achievement is **0.25**

This means ...

A one standard deviation increase in teacher perceptions of principal leadership is associated with a 10 percentile-point gain in school achievement.

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Finding 2 – Leadership Responsibilities and Practices

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Finding #2:
Responsibilities & practices

- **21 leadership responsibilities**
- **66 leadership practices**
- **All correlated to student achievement**
- **Each correlation is statistically significant**

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We would like to make it clear that these 21 responsibilities are not new. These responsibilities can be identified throughout the literature on principal leadership. Leadership theorists and researchers have cautioned that the generalities implied throughout the literature do not inform us to a great extent in a practical and applicable sense. Simply, leadership behaviors are crucial to highly responsive organization and their objective to improve student achievement. Our examination of principal leadership identified 21 categories of behaviors that we refer to as “Responsibilities”. Additionally, we have identified associated

practices for each of these responsibilities that help clarify specific actions that exemplify each responsibility.

21 Leadership Responsibilities in Alpha Order

Affirmation	Involvement with CIA
Change agent	Knowledge of CIA
Communication	Monitor/evaluate
Contingent rewards	Optimize
Culture	Order
Discipline	Outreach

Flexibility	Relationships
Focus	Resources
Ideals/beliefs	Situational awareness
Input	Visibility
Intellectual stimulation	

Finding 3 – The Differential Impact of Leadership

In some of the studies in the meta-analysis, principals were rated by their staff as strong leaders, yet student achievement was low. The third finding is about the differential impact of leadership, which means that leaders perceived as strong do not always have a positive impact on student achievement. In short, strong leadership is not always associated with high student achievement.

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Finding #3:
The differential impact of leadership

Leaders perceived as strong *do not always* have a positive effect on student achievement.



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First or second order?

Do stakeholders perceive the change as...

an extension of the past?	a break with the past?
consistent with prevailing organizational norms?	inconsistent with prevailing organizational norms?
congruent with personal values?	incongruent with personal values?
easily learned using existing knowledge and skills?	requiring new knowledge and skills?
First-Order Implications	Second-Order Implications

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In our search for answers to our research questions, Marzano and Waters rely on the use of a meta-analysis as the model. A meta-analysis is a search for homogeneity. That is, seeking factors that are common across studies. When results such as Finding #3, emerge that are contrary to the general findings, we are ethically obligated to explain the discrepancy. Our explanation of this discrepancy is that the principal might be focused on the wrong initiatives or school level influences and/or might have miscalculated the implications of change brought about by new initiatives.

Focus of Change and Magnitude of Change

Our research informs us of 11 influences at the school level that have an impact on student achievement. One explanation of the differential impact of leadership on student achievement is that the principal may be focused on the wrong things. One example of “ineffective focus” might be that the principal continues to focus his/her strict attention to a school level practice that is already very well implemented. That is not to suggest that the principal ignore that particular school level practice, on the contrary the principal should continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of that practice.

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Focus of change:
Influences on student learning

School 	1. Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum 2. Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback 3. Parent and Community Involvement 4. Safe and Orderly Environment 5. Collegiality and Professionalism
Teacher 	6. Instructional Strategies 7. Classroom Management 8. Classroom Curriculum Design
Student 	9. Home Environment 10. Learned Intelligence and Background Knowledge 11. Motivation

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However, the principal should then focus his/her energy to other school level influences that they believe or that their data would indicate needs attention.

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McREL's view of change

The **magnitude of change** is defined by the **implications** it has for the people expected to implement it and/or those who will be impacted by it.

The same change can be perceived differently by different stakeholders.

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To further explain the differential impact of leadership on student achievement is that the principal underestimated the implications that a change initiative had on the implementers. Throughout the historical and current literature on leadership the need for the leader to be very accomplished in managing change is paramount to improving organizational effectiveness. In fact, most if not all standards for administrative performance will be explicit regarding the need for leaders to deeply understand the change process. We rely on a synthesis of many different change theorists such as; William Bridges, Larry Cuban, Michael Fullan, Ron Heifetz, Kurt Lewin and Everett Rogers.

We draw on the expertise of these individuals in the field of change to inform our work in educational leadership to help principals with the complex task of managing change. **It is important for principals to understand that there are types of change, however in understanding that, we view change from the perspective that change has implications for individuals regardless of the type.** We use the terms *first-order* and *second-order* to describe the **implications** that the change has on different stakeholders, not to describe the change itself. This distinction is subtle but very important for understanding how to lead change effectively.

Therefore when you consider change reflect on what Waters, Marzano & McNulty, understand about leadership and educational improvement. “**Leaders** influence individuals and organizations. At the individual level, leaders support learning that leads to individual and organizational goals. At the organizational level, leaders develop a shared vision and broad goals. Leaders accept responsibility for achieving results and create the necessary environments that contribute to individual and organizational success”. (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003)

1st and 2nd Order Change – Finding 4 Factor Analysis

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First or second order?

Do stakeholders perceive the change as...

an extension of the past?	a break with the past?
consistent with prevailing organizational norms?	inconsistent with prevailing organizational norms?
congruent with personal values?	incongruent with personal values?
easily learned using existing knowledge and skills?	requiring new knowledge and skills?
First-Order Implications	Second-Order Implications

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Order of change is the magnitude and implications of changes for the people expected to implement them or those who will be impacted by them (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

First-order change implies a logical extension of past and current practices intended to make incremental improvements in the current situation. First-order changes can be implemented with current knowledge and skills (Waters et al., 2003).

Second-order change implies a fundamental or significant break with past and current practices intended to make

dramatic differences in the current situation. Second-order changes require new knowledge and skills for successful implementation (Waters et al., 2003).

The Factor Analysis

Continuing to deepen our understanding and refinement of leadership practices associated with student achievement we conducted a factor analysis. Specifically, McREL researchers developed a 92-item online survey, which they used to collect data from 652 principals about the extent to which the principals were

fulfilling the 21 leadership responsibilities and to what extent they were engaged in leading first- and second-order changes.

In conducting the factor analysis we looked to perhaps reduce the number of responsibilities into smaller subset of responsibilities or looked to see if we could combine some responsibilities. We found that all 21 responsibilities stood on their own merit. However, there are three major findings of the factor analysis. Two major factors emerged, which McREL named first-order change and second-order change. All of the 21 leadership responsibilities loaded on change with first-order implications. However, eleven responsibilities loaded on change having second-order implications. Seven responsibilities were positively correlated and four responsibilities were negatively correlated.

Finding 5 – Factor Analysis

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Finding #5: First-order change
(rank ordered)

1. Monitor/evaluate

2. Culture

3. Ideals and beliefs

4. Knowledge of CIA

5. Involvement in CIA

6. Focus

7. Order

8. Affirmation

9. Intellectual stimulation

10. Communication

11. Input

12. Relationships

13. Optimize

14. Flexibility

15. Resources

16. Contingent rewards

17. Situational awareness

18. Outreach

19. Visibility

20. Discipline

21. Change agent

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Finding 5 concludes that when principals’ perceive the change initiative as having first order implications all 21 responsibilities are essential. The adjacent slide indicates a rank order of the 21 leadership responsibilities. As you can well assume when the change initiative does not require new learning, is congruent with current values, and is an extension of past practice then the leader is required to fulfill, at the least, the first 5 or 6 responsibilities.

Finding 6 – Factor Analysis

Here are the seven responsibilities that positively correlate to second-order change, which provide an empirical basis for your leadership practice. If you look at the list of responsibilities, you can quickly see how they relate to second-order change—with one exception: Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Even though at first glance, Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment might appear to be unrelated to second-order change, it is actually consistent with change theory. One of the practices associated with Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is providing conceptual guidance to teachers. A second-order change is defined partially by the new knowledge that users will need to acquire. Thus, a leader must know about the best practices associated with curriculum, instruction, and assessment to provide the type of guidance that staff members will need to be successful.

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Finding #6: Second-order change
Positively correlated responsibilities
(rank ordered)

1. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment

2. Optimize


3. Intellectual stimulation

4. Change agent

5. Monitor/evaluate

6. Flexibility

7. Ideals/beliefs



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Finding #6: Second-order change
Negatively correlated responsibilities

(rank ordered)

1. Culture
2. Communication
3. Order
4. Input



(Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005)

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These four responsibilities were negatively correlated to second order change. On the survey, principals rated the degree to which they emphasized the different responsibilities in relation to a change that they perceived as second order. **McREL interprets this finding to mean that when principals lead changes perceived as second order, Culture, Communication, Order, and Input are perceived by others as declining—as not being fulfilled as well as they could be.** In many ways, when reviewing these responsibilities, this finding is not surprising. Anyone who has had to deal with the implications of what is perceived as a second-order change knows that people feel like

their world has become disordered, that communication has broken down, that the leader is less accessible than usual, that their sense of well-being has diminished, or that they have “lost their voice” in the decision-making process. Regardless of how much additional attention and effort the principal might give to these responsibilities, the data suggest that they may be viewed by teachers, other staff members, and community members as not being fulfilled as effectively as they once were. However, this does not mean that these responsibilities should be ignored and de-emphasized when leading change perceived as second-order. In fact, like the seven positively correlated responsibilities, these four need to be fulfilled—especially when guiding changes with second-order implications. **The question is not IF they should be fulfilled but WHO should fulfill them.** McREL’s guidance and the literature suggest sharing these four responsibilities with others when leading changes that are perceived as second order.

Purposeful Communities

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Characteristics of a purposeful community

- Accomplish purpose and produce outcomes that matter to all
- Development and use of all available assets
- Agreed-upon processes
- Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy is the characteristic that distinguishes purposeful community from other theories about communities.

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In order to maximize the effectiveness of the effort to improve the conditions by which children experience school and improve the achievement of all, leaders must develop and sustain a community that is committed to common goals and outcomes. The social dynamics of today’s communities make this component of the Balanced Leadership Framework™ seem unrealistic. However, we make a strong case that the intentional and strategic use of leadership responsibilities and the supporting literature and research offer obtainable development of Purposeful Communities. The development and sustainability of Purposeful Community is a powerful

construct within the Balanced Leadership Framework. Arguably, everything that happens in leadership happens within the context of the community. A Purposeful Community is much better equipped to meet the challenges and expectations for improving student performance.

Many schools today are engaged in the development and use of professional learning communities. A purposeful community is a more robust approach PLC’s. While the elements are similar to some degree, a purposeful community expands the construct to include **Collective Efficacy**.



Our definition of a purposeful community is one in which the community has the collective efficacy to use and develop all available assets to accomplish purpose and produce outcomes that matter to all through agreed upon processes.

Therefore, there are 4 important characteristics for leaders to understand in the development and maintenance of Purposeful Communities;

1. Accomplish purpose and outcomes that matter to all
2. Use of all available assets – both tangible and intangible
3. Agreed-upon processes
4. Collective Efficacy.

Collective Efficacy

Lastly, we incorporate the research and work of the social-cognitive theorist to develop collective efficacy. What can we accomplish together that we can't accomplish individually. The development of collective efficacy will help organizational resilience in the face of challenges when we strive to accomplish our intended outcomes. Collective efficacy can be measured and developed. The research informs us that there are five ways to develop collective efficacy;

1. Mastery Experience
2. Vicarious Experience
3. Social Persuasion
4. Affective States
5. Group Enablement

Our Balanced Leadership development sessions go into great depth in assisting both experienced practitioners, novice and aspiring administrators a deeper understanding of components of the Balanced Leadership Framework™. To our knowledge there has not been a comprehensive study of this magnitude of the effects of principal leadership on student achievement. We believe that it is our professional obligation to continue to extend our knowledge and refine our practice to improve educational opportunities for our youth. Through continual research, staff development and organizational capacity building are we likely to dramatically improve our schools. Intentionally emphasizing the leadership responsibilities within the context of our unique educational and social environments and capitalizing on the professional wisdom and experience of leaders, gives us the greatest hope of executing the complexities of leadership at the highest levels in order to achieve our goal of improving student achievement.

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